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## NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Elliot Krieger, Communications – (401) 222-8471  
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### **Science Report Card: Large Achievement Gaps Persist in Rhode Island**

The 2009 National Assessment of Educational Achievement (NAEP) science assessment, sometimes referred to as “The Nation’s Report Card,” reveals evidence of large achievement gaps among various student groups in Rhode Island.

Assessment results that the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) released today (January 25) show that while 86% of white students in grade 4 scored at “basic or above,” only 46% of black students and 44% of Hispanic students reached the same achievement level.

In grade 8, 74% of Hispanic students scored below basic; nationally 59% of Hispanic students scored below basic. Rhode Island has the lowest overall score among grade-8 Hispanic students in the country.

Gaps of more than 30 percentage points also exist between students with and without disabilities and between students in poverty and students not in poverty, in both grades 4 and 8.

Overall, Rhode Island grade-4 scores were slightly above the national average, while grade-8 scores were slightly below the national average.

In grade 4, 74% of Rhode Island students scored at or above basic, 3 points above the national average; 34% scored at or above proficient, 2 points above the national average.

In grade 8, 59% scored at or above basic, 3 points below the national average; 26 percent scored at or above proficient, 3 points below the national average.

Rhode Island had the lowest scores in New England (Vermont did not participate).

“We are very troubled by these persistent achievement gaps, which we have seen in the NECAP as well as the NAEP assessments,” said Robert G. Flanders, Jr., Esq., Chairman of the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education. “As we work to transform education in Rhode Island, it is essential that we accelerate learning for all students so that achievement levels increase and these achievement gaps cease to exist.”

“The NAEP science results are further evidence that the need to transform our schools is urgent,” said Deborah A. Gist, Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education. “With support from Race to the Top funds, we are expanding our curriculum work and professional-development initiatives across Rhode Island so that all educators have the resources and knowledge they need to teach science effectively. We have to ensure that all of our students receive a world-class education, including high-quality, hands-on, experience-based learning in the sciences and technology.”

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A selected sample of 4<sup>th</sup>-grade and 8<sup>th</sup>-grade students (about 3,000 in each grade) from across the state took the NAEP science test from January through March of 2009. NCES releases statewide results for grades 4 and 8 only; it releases no results at the school or district level.

The assessment content areas are physical science, life science, and earth & space science. Because 2009 NAEP Science is a substantially new assessment, comparison of scores with previous NAEP science assessments are not valid.

The NCES, which is a division of the U.S. Department of Education, defines the basic scoring level as “partial mastery of prerequisite knowledge and skills that are fundamental for proficient work.” Students at the proficiency level “have demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter.”

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (RIDE) will post further information on the Rhode Island NAEP scores on the RIDE Web site:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Assessment/default.aspx>

The NCES has posted information about the NAEP science results on its site:

<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard>

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